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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

6/24/98

NSC BRIEFING

29 June 1955

THE WEST GERMAN ARMS DEBATE

- I. Bitterly contested arms debate in West German Bundestag is something of an indirect rebuff to Adenauer, but, does not indicate his power over public opinion and the Bundestag is slipping.
 - A. Coalition opposition to the poorly drafted bill only reflects deep concern that Prussian type militarism be avoided.
 - B. Poor coordination between ministries and parliament also responsible for poor showing of coalition in the debate.
 - C. Adenauer's general popularity remains almost at its peak.
- II. The debate on 27-28 June over the temporary arms bill makes it uncertain that Adenauer can put any Germans into uniform before fall.
 - A. Bill authorizes calling up 6000 volunteers for army nucleus.
 - B. Bundestag passed bill on first reading but demanded changes in text to define more sharply civilian control over army.
 - C. Because the Bundestag adjourns on 15 July, little time left for changes so that Bundestag and Bundesrat can give it final approval. (Three readings required for Bundestag approval.)
- III. Attitude of the Bundestag towards the government's temporary ⁴⁰ ~~arms~~ bill suggests trouble ^{ahead} already for permanent arms legislation.
 - A. Permanent legislation consists of some 20 bills to be ^{intr} during next six months.

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- B. Both houses of parliament show disposition to haggle over terms of each bill.
- C. During arms debate, Adenauer was forced to promise coalition that several rearmament aspects would be covered by constitutional amendments.
 - 1. On strictly legal basis, rearmament per se probably requires no constitutional changes.
 - 2. One change in constitution necessary if West Germany takes over all sovereign powers granted it under Paris accords.
 - 3. Adenauer probably no longer has two-thirds constitutional majority in Bundestag due to the increasing unreliability of the coalition Refugee Party.
- D. Further coalition difficulties can be expected over rearmament legislation when Adenauer is forced to renege on promises for rearmament constitutional amendments.
- IV. Progress on arms bills will be slow and large scale call up of volunteers will not likely occur until next spring.
- V. Attitude displayed by Bundestag during the debate suggests that many deputies want to procrastinate on enacting a conscription bill until after next federal elections in mid-1957.

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